



from the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee
P.O. Box 11867 • Room 227 Blatt Building
Columbia, South Carolina, 29211
Communications Office, (803) 734-6164 • Dana Yow
www.sceoc.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, December 13, 2004

EOC recommends recommitment to funding for South Carolina schools

EDITOR'S NOTE: The EOC held a full meeting December 13, 2004, at 1:00 p.m. in Room 433, Blatt Building. Recommendations to the budget were made at this meeting.

Columbia – South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) members presented their budget recommendations for the 2005-06 fiscal year today, recommending an increase of over \$170 million dollars for South Carolina schools.

Committee members recommended an increase of \$37 million in Education Improvement Act (EIA) programs that safeguard progress and provide resources to all schools. The increases address recruitment and retention of teachers through maintaining teacher salaries above the southeastern average and increasing access and funds for the teacher loan program. Also included in the recommendations are increases in the Advanced Placement and Gifted and Talented programs, designed to ensure high performance in our schools.

Also included within the committee's recommendations is that the base student cost be restored to full funding across the next three fiscal years, rather than on an indefinite schedule. This gradual restoration of funds will provide significant increases in the funds available to all schools and can be used for reductions in class size, purchases of instructional materials, and other uses defined at the district and school level.

"Although our wish is to remedy the deficit funding of the base student cost immediately, the reality of the revenues available suggest a more pragmatic approach," stated Jo Anne Anderson, EOC Executive Director.

As a result of the slow pace of improvement in reading and the relationship of reading proficiency to performance in all content areas, the EOC suggested significant attention be placed on the teaching of reading in our schools.

“PACT performance in English Language Arts shows the need for reading to be given greater priority,” stated Jo Anne Anderson, EOC Executive Director, “it is clear that some students are not picking up those basic skills and that reading is not being taught consistently across the grade levels and through the content areas.”

After evaluating the performance of schools rated Unsatisfactory or Below Average receiving on-site assistance personnel and the performance of those schools rated similarly which received other methods of assistance, the EOC concluded reductions could be made in technical assistance funding commensurate with the number of schools rated Unsatisfactory or Below Average.

The proposed reduction of approximately \$4.4 million will continue to fund 307 full-time, extra personnel in 22 schools rated Unsatisfactory and 160 Below Average schools. Also recommended is an increase in funding for summer schools to address needs of students who are falling behind and \$4.0 million for alternative technical assistance programs that will build local capacity for long-term educational improvement.

“The bottomline is that our schools are making progress and the number of schools rated Unsatisfactory and Below Average is dropping. This success impacts the budget in that it adjusts the number of assistance personnel needed,” stated Anderson, “while there are legitimate concerns that the schools newly off the ‘list’ (Unsatisfactory or Below Average) are vulnerable to fluctuations, those schools will retain existing support in the form of retraining grants, lottery enhancement grants, and other funding, including federal support through Title One and Reading First, for eligible schools.”

These schools will also benefit from proposed increases to the base student cost as well as increases to summer school funding and programs serving the gifted and talented, according to Anderson.

“We must guard against the unnecessary growth of additional assistance personnel creating the perception of an entitlement program. Local communities must be given the opportunity to take ownership of the education challenges within their communities and address those needs for long-term effectiveness to occur,” stated Anderson.

Established by the EAA, the EOC is an independent, non-partisan, 18-member legislative committee made up of educators, business persons, and elected officials who serve by virtue of their elected position or by appointment of the legislature or governor. It bears responsibilities for the development and improvement of SC’s educational accountability system and for making recommendations to ensure the continuous improvement of schools.